

エゼキエル書 18 章におけるいのちと死

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ABSTRACT Nobuyoshi KIUCHI, “Life and Death in Ezekiel 18” The importance of the Hebrew terms for life and death in Ezekiel 18 has escaped scholars’ attention. The large majority of modern Ezekielian scholars have taken for granted that the Hebrew terms for life/to live and death/to die in Ezek 18 refer to physical life and death, which is apparently the same attitude as that of the people reflected in the proverb “The fathers eat sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge”(NIV). While it appears true that those terms include some physical sense, this alone creates inconsistencies within the book as regards the righteous’ living and the wicked’s dying (e.g. 21:3, 4), and, in fact, the alleged gaps are viewed as defying any attempt of harmonization.

This study calls into question the above assumptions and approaches to this chapter by discussing the important term *nepēš* (vv. 4, 27), along with its relation to *lēb* (‘heart’) and *rūaḥ* (‘spirit’), and then by exploring the true intention of the Lord’s discourse. First, it is argued that the term *nepēš* should be uniformly translated ‘soul.’ Although this translation does not quite fit the Hebrew, it is still better than the translation ‘a person’ (‘iś) or ‘a man’ in that it can be used in describing the inner state of the human heart (*lēb*), as in ‘a dead soul.’ A contextual examination of the term *nepēš* and the expression ‘a new heart and a new spirit’ (v.31) implies that the *nepēš* is presumed to possess an old or corrupt spirit that drives a person into sinning. Moreover, examination of ‘he shall live’ or ‘he shall die’ shows (1) that the Lord presents His own argument in such a way that it is the righteous person who lives, and the wicked who dies, hence the postulate precludes the notion of mere physical life, and (2) that the righteous lives as long as he observes all the Lord’s commandments and the wicked is dead even before his physical death. In fact, *môt hammēt* in v. 32 should probably be rendered ‘the death of the dead’ rather than ‘the death of anyone.’ Here *hammēt* is tantamount to saying ‘the dead soul.’

The close linkage in Ezekiel 18 to the Leviticus laws, particularly Lev 18-26, has been recognized by scholars, but their neglect of the Lord's reference to Leviticus 4, especially the protases to offering a sin offering, has made them miss the extremely high demand of being righteous before God; if a person violates *one* prohibitive commandment, he violates *all* the prohibitive commandments. In sum, while the legal examples the Lord cites are addressed to the exiles in Babylon, they have a universal dimension that can be applied to any human being.

The Lord's stringent and high standard of becoming righteous (*ṣaddiq*) sets itself apart from the mention of righteous persons in other parts of the book. We are shown at least three types of righteous persons - the righteous who are doomed (21:3, 4); the righteous like Noah, Daniel, and Job who can save their own lives amid calamities such as the Babylonian exile (14:12-20) but still die in the end in some way or other; and the righteous person in Ezek. 18 who is to live both physically and spiritually before the Lord.

It appears that the Lord's high standard in this chapter tacitly functions to drive the audience even to despair of returning to the Lord. Yet, this despair is paradoxically indispensable for their spiritual resurrection, as they were arrogant, considering themselves righteous (cf 33:10-20).